

**MORAL DECADENCE IN F. SCOTT FITZGERALD'S *THE BEAUTIFUL
AND DAMNED* (1922): A SOCIO-CULTURAL APPROACH**



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**Moral Decadence in Fitzgerald's *The Beautiful and Damned*
(1922) Novel: A Socio-cultural Perspective**

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ACCEPTANCE

MORAL DECADENCE IN FITZGERALD'S *THE BEAUTIFUL AND DAMNED* (1922) NOVEL: A SOCIO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

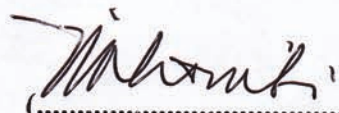
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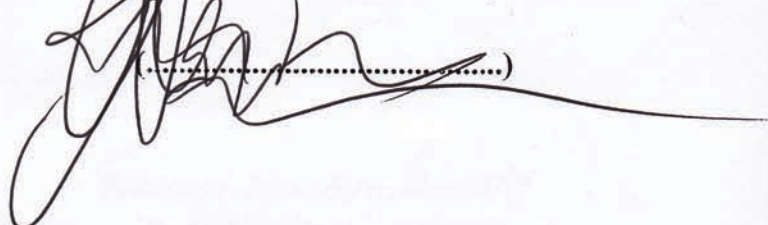
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**MORAL DECADENCE IN F. SCOTT FITZGERALD'S *THE BEAUTIFUL
AND DAMNED* (1922): A SOCIO-CULTURAL APPROACH**

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ABSTRACT

*The study aims at analyzing the moral decadence in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Beautiful and Damned* in literature. The study employs the qualitative method. The object of the study includes the novel itself, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Beautiful and Damned*. The theoretical employed is the sociology of literature that shows the relationship between literature the social realities of during and aftermath World War I and the novel. The data are collected by means of library research and note-taking technique and are analyzed by means of descriptive technique. The outcome of the study shows the following conclusions: (1) Fitzgerald's *The Beautiful and Damned* that is written in period of World War I indicates the cultural civil war where people want to enjoy the moment after depressing of war; (2) The novel demonstrates the choice of life where truly happiness needs effort and perseverance.*

Keywords: disinheritance, party, alcohol, insane

INTRODUCTION

Life style brings people to the new era, Roaring Twenty. The new habituation signs the period of modern era. The United States enters to the World War I causes American depressed. When The United States declared to finish the war, American celebrates it. The Americans wear good clothes, have good dishes, and have party and drink etc in this period. They want to forget the bitter of war.

Consumptive is a life style which is own some Americans. They have extra money to spend, and they spend it on consumer goods such as ready-to-wear clothes, stay in hotel and many other luxurious activities. They need material possession to survive. Money is symbol of wealth.

The symbol of Roaring Twenty is described well in one of F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel. Fitzgerald's *The Beautiful and Damned* is a novel written in 1922. It is published in the same year after finished writing by Scribner's. Pennsylvania University Press copies it in 2009. It consists of 327 pages.

The novel *The Beautiful and Damned* tells about the couple husband and wife who have an annoying habit. They love party and drinking but they do not like working. They wish they will get heritance from his richest grandpa as soon as possible. It is moral decadence in modern era. So, this study chooses moral decadence as an issue and Sociology as the perspective of the study.

The benefits of the study are divided into two parts. The first is theoretical benefit; this research will become a reference to study literature, especially novel analysis using sociology approach. It gives a contribution to English learning. The second is practical benefit; this research gives a deep understanding for the writer herself about the novel based on sociology approach. The objectives of the study are to analyze the novel based on the sociological approach.

Sociological approach focuses on the social reflection as well as it is study in terms of the social context of authorship constitutes the major modes of study. According to Swingewood "The most popular perspective adopts the documentary aspect of literature, arguing that it provides a mirror to the age" (Swingewood and Laurenson, 1972: 13). Sociological approach gives a large explanation about the relation among people.

Sociology studies all aspect of life. This theory assumes that literary work appears related with the aspects of life, such as social, economy, culture, religious, science and technology and politic aspects.

RESEARCH METHOD

The writer employs the qualitative research. It is library research while data sources are using literary data. It purposes to analyze the novel using sociology approach. The steps to conduct this research are determining the type of study, determining the object of the study, determining the data and data source, determining technique of data collection, and determining technique of data analysis.

The objective of the study is the novel F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Beautiful and Damned*. It is written in 1922 and republished in 2009 by Pennsylvania University Press.

There are two data sources that are needed to do this research (1) Primary Data Source, the primary data source is the novel Fitzgerald's *The Beautiful and Damned* itself. (2) Secondary Data Source, the secondary data sources sociology Theory book and other sources.

The technique of data collection is library research, the steps are: Reading the text of the novel to get the messages, and better understanding. Reading some related references to observe the theory, data and information. Making notes of important part in both primary and secondary data sources. Classifying the data into some categories. The technique of analyzing data is descriptive analysis. Descriptive means that the researcher interprets the text to analyze text and content relating to sociological condition.

RESEARCH FINDING AND DISCUSSION

According to Swingewood and Laurenson (1972:13), the principles of sociology of literature can be divided into three, namely: sociology of the society, sociology of the author and sociology of the reader.

Based on the issue, this study is reflected in Sociology approach. The application of sociological analysis is divided into six specific parts namely social, economic, political, religious, science and technology, and culture. Fitzgerald's *The Beautiful and Damned* generally wants to express moral decadence reflected in this novel.

1. Aspect of American Society

a. Social Aspect

The United States' people divided into three major classes. They are Upper class, Middle Class, and Lower Class. Upper class is usually whites with good or high income. They have certain job caused have high income.

Now Adam J. Patch, more familiarly known as "Cross Patch," left his father's farm in Tarrytown early in sixty-one to join a New York cavalry regiment. He came home from the war a major, charged into Wall Street, and amid much fuss, fume, applause, and ill will he gathered to himself some seventy-five million dollars.(TBD page: 05)

The middle class is American who has good income but it is not as well as Upper's. They are able to spend money to get their wealth capacity. The job is usually not permanent such a writer.

"We've been talking about you," said Dick quickly, "—your mother and I." "Well," said Gloria. A pause—Muriel turned to Dick. "You're a great writer, aren't you?" "I'm a writer," he confessed sheepishly. "I always say," said Muriel earnestly, "that if I ever had time to write down all my experiences it'd make a wonderful book."(TBD page: 70)

The last is lower class who is owned by black, Afro-American and white who works as slave. They have no certain income. Sometimes they do not be paid and stay in hunger.

b. Economic Aspect

The strong economy also creates the right environment for many important changes in social life of the American people. The condition after war brings a feeling of freedom and independence to millions of Americans, especially young Americans. Young soldiers return from the world war with new ideas. They have seen a different world in Europe.

They have faced death and learned to enjoy the pleasures that each day offered.

The condition of United States in 1920s reflects in *The Beautiful and Damned*. The role of economic takes part in whole of society life. The condition after war makes the people becomes consumptive. People like to spend the day in hotel, watching movie, having dance and party. They also had extra money to spend on things other than food, housing, and other basic needs. They could experiment with new products and different ways of living.

One day, early in January, as she was walking on Fifth Avenue, bright now with uniforms and hung with the flags of the virtuous nations, she met Rachael Barnes, whom she had not seen for nearly a year. Even Rachael, whom she had grown to dislike, was a relief from ennui, and together they went to the Ritz for tea. (TBD page: 298)

The rising of science and technology brings the United States into welfare. American maintains the hotel and other entertainment's facilities to gain the benefit. Any job vacancies and other ideas of exploring the business give space for American to gain extra benefit.

c. Political Aspect

F. Scott Fitzgerald tries to involve the political aspect through his novel. The novel, *The Beautiful and Damned*, describes the little condition of politic of United States during World War I. The elected president, Woodrow Wilson declares the war with Germany.

In April war was declared with Germany. Wilson and his cabinet— a cabinet that in its lack of distinction was strangely reminiscent of the twelve apostles— let loose the carefully starved dogs of war, and the press began to whoop hysterically against the sinister morals, sinister philosophy, and sinister music produced by the Teutonic temperament. Those who fancied themselves particularly broad-minded made the exquisite distinction that it was only the German Government which aroused them to hysteria; the rest were worked up to a condition of retching indecency. Any song which contained the word “mother” and the word “kaiser” was assured of a tremendous success. At last everyone had something to talk about—and almost every one fully enjoyed it, as though they had been cast for parts in a somber and romantic play.(TBD page: 254)

When President Woodrow Wilson returns to the United States from the Paris Peace Conference, he tries unsuccessfully to get America to join the new League of Nations, which has been his idea. But America

is fed up with Europe. Over thousands American soldiers have died fighting to solve Europe's problems. Many people wanted to make sure that their country never got involved in another war.

Because of the death of thousands American's soldiers, the government offers the young men to apply as military men. They will have military education and then be sent to the war. It is a choice job. They can apply as officers too. The condition of war forces the government to recruit them.

The United States tries to protect the nation by settle the Army. War is the best way to get pride from other country. Military camps are in many places. It is completed with facilities so that the soldiers enjoy the camp.

Camp Hooker was an astonishing and spectacular growth, suggesting "A Mining Town in 1870—The Second Week." It was a thing of wooden shacks and whitish-gray tents, connected by a pattern of roads, with hard tan drill-grounds fringed with trees. Here and there stood green Y.M.C.A. houses, unpromising oases, with their muggy odor of wet flannels and closed telephone-booths—and across from each of them there was usually a canteen, swarming with life, presided over indolently by an officer who, with the aid of a side-car, usually managed to make his detail a pleasant and chatty sinecure (TBD page: 261)

d. Religious Aspect

F. Scott Fitzgerald is a great writer. He describes how is the religion develop well through his novel, *The Beautiful and Damned*. The most faith the Americans have is Christianity.

MAURY: (With laughter) Here we sit vowing to each other that little Dick sees less deeply into things than we do. And I'll bet he feels a measure of superiority on his side—creative mind over merely critical mind and all that.

ANTHONY: Oh, yes. But he's wrong. He's inclined to fall for a million silly enthusiasms. If it wasn't that he's absorbed in realism and therefore has to adopt the garments of the cynic he'd be—he'd be credulous as a college religious leader. He's an idealist. Oh, yes. He thinks he's not, because he's rejected Christianity. Remember him in college? just swallow every writer whole, one after another, ideas, technic, and characters, Chesterton, Shaw, Wells, each one as easily as the last. (TBD page: 19)

The people at the roaring twenty of United States need a soul recovery after World War I. Some do such leading to reincarnation of soul that is called bilphism.

Bilphist is not a religion. It is a belief. People with religion may follow this belief. It teaches about the reincarnation of human's soul. Fitzgerald uses this term to call people who join the group of reincarnation's soul.

But she demanded the whole loaf:

"Oh, yes, but you see Bilphism isn't a religion. It's the science of all religions." She smiled defiantly at him. This was the bon mot of her belief. There was something in the arrangement of words which grasped her mind so definitely that the statement became superior to any obligation to define itself. It is not unlikely that she would have accepted any idea encased in this radiant formula—which was perhaps not a formula; it was the *reductio ad absurdum* of all formulas.

Then eventually, but gorgeously, would come Dick's turn.

"You've heard of the new poetry movement. You haven't? Well, it's a lot of young poets that are breaking away from the old forms and doing a lot of good. Well, what I was going to say was that my book is going to start a new prose movement, a sort of renaissance." (TBD page: 64)

e. Science and Technology Aspect

The modern motion picture is for the most part a product of the 1920s. In the first decade of the century movies were little more than video-parlor curiosities viewed by one person at a time. During the 1920s large, Art Deco motion-picture houses were constructed. By the mid 1920s movies had started coming out in color, and sound was added in the late 1920s.

New machines and technologies like the washing machine and the vacuum cleaner eliminate some of the drudgery of household work. It helps people to do the housework. No need to waste time if they use machines.

Two inventions also help cause the social changes. They are the automobile and the radio. The automobile gives millions of Americans the freedom to travel easily to new places. Cars also give young people the freedom to go where they please and do what they want. In this era, people are not easy to have car. Some people who have much money can buy it. And the radio brings new ideas and experiences into their own homes.

"Jitney! Jitney!" ... It was an empty Ford "I want to go to town."
"Cost you a dollar."

“All right. If you’ll just hurry—” (TBD page: 284)

f. Cultural Aspect

The novel *The Beautiful and Damned* expresses the society in time period of early twentieth century. It is around 1920s. It is called the Roaring Twenties. The most familiar symbol of the “Roaring Twenties” is probably the flapper. Flapper is a young woman with bobbed hair and short skirts. They like to drink, smoke and say what might be termed unladylike things.

“Where are you from?” inquired Anthony. He knew, but beauty had rendered him thoughtless.

“Kansas City, Missouri.”

“They put her out the same time they barred cigarettes.”

“Did they bar cigarettes? I see the hand of my holy grandfather.”

“He’s a reformer or something, isn’t he?”

“I blush for him.”

“So do I,” she confessed. “I detest reformers, especially the sort who try to reform me.”

“Are there many of those?”

“Dozens. It’s ‘Oh, Gloria, if you smoke so many cigarettes you’ll lose your pretty complexion!’ and ‘Oh, Gloria, why don’t you marry and settle down?’”(TBD page: 50)

Party is one of favorite thing. It symbolizes the freedom of young boys and girls. They together regard it as a symbol of modern.

Then the champagne—and the party assumed more amusing proportions. The men, except Richard Caramel, drank freely; Gloria and Muriel sipped a glass apiece; Rachael Jerry took none. They sat out the waltzes but danced to everything else—all except Gloria, who seemed to tire after a while and preferred to sit smoking at the table, her eyes now lazy, now eager, according to whether she listened to Bloeckman or watched a pretty woman among the dancers. Several times Anthony wondered what Bloeckman was telling her. He was chewing a cigar back and forth in his mouth, and had expanded after dinner to the extent of violent gestures.(TBD page: 83)

Music also develops in this century. Jazz is one of the favorite music. Jazz music is able to follow them dancing. It is very harmonize. Jazz bands play at dance halls. It is commonly called the Jazz-age. Some older people object to jazz music but many younger’s love the freedom they felt on the dance floor.

2. Moral decadence

Moral decadence is such a decline of the rule. Decadence is described as corrosive due to a lack of ethical, moral and sexual traditions. A decadent person often overdresses, flaunting wealth.

Moral decadence defines moral as pertaining to or concerned with right conduct or the distinction between right or wrong. Some aspects are influenced by moral decadence such as politic, social and cultural, and economy.

Political aspect focuses on the way the people deny to what they, the representatives, have to do. They give so many bright promising to gain the position they hired. After time, some of them forget or even does not care to the duty they lean on. Not only politic which is shown moral decadence, but social and cultural also have.

Economical aspect shows the decay from the way people get profit using the wrong way. People use fake money or imitation products to get more and more profit. They make sure the customers to accept their concept to buy their product. It inflicts a financial loss.

People should know well the rules. Rules give good directive to manage the human relation with all living and non living thing. Moral decadence attacks everyone who does not care to others or even himself. It is better to be careful to what to do and say.

Moral decadence is the term how people get out of balance. They do what they guess right without consider the rules and other people. Every year the moral decay shows increasing.

The culture aspect directs American to the different world. The change of American habituation leads to the modern era. Flapper, dancing, jazz music are symbol of modern things for that time. Alcohol and party is not difficult to find. American enjoys the change. Anthony's wife, Gloria Gilbert, is a flapper. She likes to drink, smoke and party. Anthony with friends often held party with dancing and drinking. It shows moral decadence.

F. Scott Fitzgerald through his novel *The Beautiful and Damned* shows that meaning of life is worth. Live with meaningless life leads to nothing. People should have dreams to set the plan of what ought to do in life.

Everything has the risk and responsibility. If it takes good, it is the winner. The wholeheartedly will with the perseverance gives better result.

CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATION

Based on the sociology analysis, it is evident that in this novel, Fitzgerald wants to convey the sociological phenomena in which all aspect support to the moral decadence. By using Swingewood`s theory of sociological, the researcher analyzes the social condition of American in that period. The major characters, Anthony Patch and Gloria Gilbert are the symbol characterized the glamorous people. By way of this novel, Fitzgerald wants to convey a criticism that consumer culture makes people have false representation of money. They think money is happiness. Then it makes people get the truly happiness ever after.

Related to this study above, it is hoped can give pedagogical implication such as:

- a. The researcher hopes that this study can be useful for the readers as comparison to the other researcher in widening the knowledge of literary study.
- b. The researcher hopes this study can give contribution for the teacher as reference for English teaching learning process especially understanding about novel.

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